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STATE FOR C MPLOWDEN  
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USDA/OSEC FOR MMICHENER  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EFIN](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: CHINA/FOOD SECURITY: STILL WARY OF ACTIVE  
AFSI SUPPORT IN LEAD-UP TO ROME FAO SUMMIT

REF: A. SECSTATE 107298; B. Beijing 1727; C. Beijing  
2744

11. (SBU) Summary: China continues to be unenthusiastic about actively supporting the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI), which it sees as a developed country initiative requiring developed country resources. China would like to know more about how the U.S. plans to present AFSI principles in negotiations over declaration language for the November 16-18 Food Security Summit in Rome, and is also looking for concrete indications at the Summit that the AFSI donor pledge will materialize. Currently, Chinese interlocutors indicate that the initiative fails to address China's own food security concerns or acknowledge its bilateral food assistance. This cable provides information in response to Ref A. End Summary.

Message Delivered: We Want You On Board  
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12. (SBU) The Ambassador on October 20 delivered to Vice Foreign Minister (VFM) He Yafei the Secretary's letter (ref A) urging support for endorsing L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) principles at the November 16-18 World Food Security Summit hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome ("the Rome Summit"). VFM He told the Ambassador that he understands the importance the Secretary places on the issue. Post also provided a copy of the letter to the Ministry of Agriculture.

China, The Doubting L'Aquila Signatory  
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13. (SBU) In a follow-up meeting on October 29, Lu Mei, Deputy Director in Division 2 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Department of International Organizations and Conferences, told Econoff that China is still studying the proposal and will respond formally in due time, which may be just before or at the November 16-18 World Food Security

Summit hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome.

14. (SBU) Noting that MFA had just received a revised draft of the Rome Summit declaration from the FAO secretariat, Lu asked when and how the U.S. plans to introduce AFSI principles in negotiations over declaration language. She commented that if the principles are not included in the Summit declaration, support will not be formalized. Lu also asked about U.S. representation at the Summit, and said China's representation will be "quite high" -- above the Ministerial level.

Goals for Rome: China Looking Out For "The South"

15. (SBU) Explicitly aligning China with other developing countries, Lu said this block of countries has problems with some of the principles in the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) and the proposal accompanying the Secretary's letter. (Note: China endorsed the AFSI at the G8 Summit and sent their UN Ambassador to the Secretary's September Partnering for Food Security event in New York. End Note.) Lu cited as an example the proposal to mention the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), noting that the AAA is part of the Paris Declaration, about which many developing countries have concerns. Lu said China is also not sure how the AAA will apply to the agriculture field, and is

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studying this issue. China is also studying whether it can accept language in the newest draft of the Summit declaration on eliminating constraints on exports of food for humanitarian assistance, since food exports are a sensitive issue for China, according to Lu.

16. (SBU) Lu also said developing countries are very keen to see developed countries delivering on the AFSI USD20 billion pledge. Lu said it will be hard for countries to support the other AFSI principles if there is doubt about follow-through on this promise, and it would be helpful and important for developed countries to show concrete indications at the Rome Summit that they will deliver. Lu emphasized that the USD20 billion goal is a developed country (as opposed to developing country) obligation.

17. (SBU) Lu said that of the two main themes laid out in the FAO secretariat's letter to participants, China is focusing on the theme of governance of global food and agriculture trade and institutions. Lu opined that the other Summit theme, financing for agriculture development, "for now at least seems to always be there," apparently indicating that China itself will not focus on pressing donors to meet pledge commitments. After the global financial crisis, fair trade and representation in decision-making for developing countries were key, according to Lu. She explained further that China hopes the Summit will look at governance issues in a comprehensive way that includes broader issues such as trade and the Doha Round, commodity markets, the impacts of climate change, and climate change financing. (Comment: This comment reflects efforts by China and other developing countries to raise a range of issues at the Rome Summit that they think are not being addressed satisfactorily elsewhere. End Comment.)

Comment: Gradually Bringing China into the Fold

18. (SBU) China continues to show little interest in actively participating in many aspects of AFSI (Ref B) and is wary of stepping up as a high profile donor. Beijing policy makers are aware that China's sheer size means it plays an important role in global food security, but at this point they are preoccupied with their own domestic food security concerns. These concerns include skepticism about whether global markets can provide food security for a rapidly-growing China that is in turn influencing those markets, as well as the impact of commodity speculation on food prices (Ref B). However, China sees the Rome Summit, not AFSI, as a forum where these issues can be addressed.

19. (SBU) We may be able to overcome China's reticence regarding AFSI by showing that core Chinese concerns that the global economic system threatens China's food security can be addressed under AFSI. We can also emphasize that China's preferred method of using bilateral assistance can occur under a donor coordination framework that is both controlled by developing countries and recognized under AFSI (e.g., the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Initiative (CAADP). See Ref C). Messaging can also acknowledge China's efforts to ensure its domestic food security as an important element impacting global food security, and note that these efforts make China uniquely qualified to play a key international role.

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HUNTSMAN